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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 000136

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SY](#) [YE](#)

SUBJECT: YEMEN WILL RECEIVE BASHAR, DELIVER "TOUGH" MESSAGE

REF: STATE 11443

Classified By: AMBASSADOR THOMAS C. KRAJESKI, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Ambassador took the opportunity to deliver reftel points to FonMin Abubakr al-Qirbi on the sidelines of a reception for a visiting UK minister on January 24. Qirbi confirmed that the ROYG had "agreed" to allow Syrian President Bashar al-Asad to visit, but that the date had not yet been fixed and would not be until President Saleh returns from Germany. Ambassador urged Qirbi not to receive Bashar, emphasizing that the international community needs to isolate him and insist that Syria cooperate with the UN investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

2. (C) Qirbi did not agree with the USG's approach, arguing that the ROYG is increasingly concerned about Syria's alliance with Iran and the threat this presented to regional security. For that reason, it was important for Bashar to hear "harsh words" from President Saleh, who wants to warn Bashar "eye to eye" in Sanaa.

3. (C) Ambassador reminded Qirbi that Saleh had been very tough on Asad in his discussion with President Bush in November 2005, and that this visit appears to contradict that position. Asad will be greeted in Sanaa as a head of state, with major media coverage, and a message along the lines of "improving relations between brotherly Arab countries." Saleh's "tough message" will not be conveyed publicly, and Asad will use the visit as evidence of Yemeni support for his position. The ROYG should call off the visit, or at least postpone it indefinitely, Ambassador urged. The FonMin, clearly uncomfortable and irritated, replied, "We have already said that he could come and we cannot renege now." Krajewski